

- 1 1. A method for modulating a polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal for an
2 optical communication system, the method comprising:
 - 3 a) splitting a linearly polarized input optical clock signal having a clock rate
4 into a first and a second linearly polarized optical signal, wherein the first
5 linearly polarized optical signal comprises a first polarization state and the
6 second linearly polarized optical signal comprises a second polarization
7 state;
 - 8 b) delaying the first linearly polarized optical signal relative to the second
9 linearly polarized optical signal;
 - 10 c) combining the first and the second linearly polarized optical signals to
11 generate the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal for the optical
12 communication system; and
 - 13 d) modulating the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal with a
14 polarization-insensitive optical modulator to encode data on the
15 polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the first polarization state is orthogonal to the
2 second polarization state.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of the first and the second linearly
2 polarized optical signals is controllably attenuated.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein the delaying of the first linearly polarized optical
2 signal relative to the second linearly polarized optical signal comprises
3 propagating the first and the second linearly polarized optical signals along a first
4 and a second optical path, respectively, wherein an optical path length of the first
5 optical path is not equal to an optical path length of the second optical path.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the delaying of the first linearly polarized optical
2 signal relative to the second linearly polarized optical signal comprises
3 propagating the first and the second linearly polarized optical signals through a

first and a second polarization plane, respectively, of a birefringent medium, the first and the second polarization planes being characterized by a first and a second propagation velocity of light, respectively.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the combining of the first and the second linearly polarized optical signal to generate the polarization multiplexed optical clock signal comprises rotating at least one of the first and the second polarization states.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal has a clock rate that is substantially twice the clock rate of the input optical clock signal.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal has a clock rate that is more than twice the clock rate of the input optical clock signal.

9. A polarization-multiplexed optical data modulator comprising:

- a) an optical clock that generates an optical clock signal having a clock rate at an optical clock output;
- b) a polarization multiplexer having an input that is optically coupled to the optical clock output, the polarization multiplexer generating a polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal having a clock rate at a polarization multiplexer output; and
- c) a polarization-insensitive optical data modulator having an optical input that is optically coupled to the polarization multiplexer output, the polarization-insensitive optical data modulator modulating the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal with a data signal.

10. The data modulator of claim 9 wherein the polarization multiplexer comprises a birefringent medium having a first and a second polarization plane characterized by a first and a second propagation velocity of light, respectively.

- 1 11. The data modulator of claim 10 wherein the birefringent medium comprises a
2 polarization-maintaining optical fiber having a first and a second polarization
3 plane.
- 1 12. The data modulator of claim 11 wherein the second polarization plane is
2 substantially orthogonal to the first polarization plane.
- 1 13. The data modulator of claim 11 wherein the first and the second polarization
2 planes of the polarization-maintaining optical fiber are oriented at substantially
3 forty-five degrees relative to a plane of polarization of the optical clock signal.
- 1 14. The data modulator of claim 11 wherein an angle of the first and the second
2 polarization planes of the polarization-maintaining optical fiber relative to a plane
3 of polarization of the optical clock signal is adjustable.
- 1 15. The data modulator of claim 9 wherein the polarization multiplexer comprises:
2 a) an optical beamsplitter that splits the optical clock signal into a first and a
3 second optical signal;
4 b) a first and a second polarization-maintaining optical fiber that receives the
5 first and the second optical signals, respectively, an optical path length of
6 the first polarization-maintaining optical fiber being different from an
7 optical path length of the second polarization-maintaining optical fiber by
8 an optical path difference, wherein the first optical signal is delayed
9 relative to the second optical signal by a time that is proportional to the
10 optical path difference; and
11 c) an optical combiner that combines the first and the second optical signals.
- 1 16. The data modulator of claim 9 wherein the polarization-multiplexed optical clock
2 signal has a clock rate that is substantially twice the clock rate of the optical clock
3 signal.
- 1 17. The data modulator of claim 9 wherein the polarization-multiplexed optical clock

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output of the birefringent medium.

32. A polarization-multiplexed optical data modulator comprising:

- a) a means for generating an optical clock signal comprising a train of optical pulses having a polarization state;
- b) a means for optically splitting the optical clock signal into a first optical signal and a second optical signal, each of the first and the second optical signals having a first and a second polarization state, respectively;
- c) a means for delaying the first optical signal relative to the second optical signal;
- d) a means for rotating the first polarization state of the first optical signal relative to the second polarization state of the second optical signal, wherein the rotating of the first polarization state relative to the second polarization state orients the first polarization state substantially orthogonal to the second polarization state;
- e) a means for optically combining the first optical signal and the second optical signal to generate the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal; and
- f) a means for modulating the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal with a data signal.

33. The polarization-multiplexed optical data modulator of claim 32 wherein the means for modulating the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal with a data signal is insensitive to the polarization state of the polarization-multiplexed optical clock signal.

34. The polarization-multiplexed optical data modulator of claim 32 further comprising a means for attenuating at least one of the first and the second optical signals.